

STATE OF ALASKA

Department of Labor and Workforce Development

OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER

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February 5, 2010

The Honorable Lyman Hoffman
The Honorable Bert Stedman
Co-Chairs Senate Finance
State Capital Building
Juneau, AK 99801-1182

Dear Senators Hoffman and Stedman,

Thank you for scheduling Senate Bill 83 which establishes a State Vocational Rehabilitation Committee (SVRC) in the Senate Finance Committee. The primary purpose of this legislation is to bring current state statute into compliance with federal law. The SVRC will function as the State Rehabilitation Council and the Assistive Technology Advisory Committee, both of which are required by federal law to accept funding from the U.S. Department of Education, Rehabilitation Services Administration to operate the Vocational Rehabilitation Client Services program and Assistive Technology grant. The SVRC will replace the Governor's Committee on Employment and Rehabilitation of People with Disabilities (GCERPD).

It is important that this legislation pass during this session. The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation is currently undergoing a federal review and monitoring of programs authorized under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended. Management and organization of the State Rehabilitation Council is included in this compliance review to determine whether the agency is fully constituted in accordance with federal law and regulations, including membership composition. Current state statutes are not in compliance with the federal laws related to the State Rehabilitation Council or the Assistive Technology Advisory Committee. Current statute was written for a committee that no longer exists, the President's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities.

The GCERPD will continue to perform the duties of the State Rehabilitation Council and the Assistive Technology Advisory Committee until this matter is resolved. The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation could be sanctioned during the federal review. Similar legislation regarding SVRC was introduced during the 25th Legislative Session.

Federal compliance is critical to assist Alaskans with disabilities to become employed and have access to appropriate assistive technology services and devices. Thank you for your consideration of this important matter. Please contact me or my Legislative Liaison, Paula Scavera at 465-2700 if you would like to discuss this further.

Sincerely,



Clark Bishop
Commissioner